

Message Text

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SUBJ: LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE NORTHEAST

REF: ROME 5462

1. DURING THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, SEVERAL MILLION ITALIANS ARE EXPECTED AT THE POLLS TO ELECT SUNDRY MUNICIPAL, PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THERE WILL BE TWO ELECTIONS IN THE KEY NORTHEAST AREA:

A. THEVENETO. LONG-TIME DC STRONGHOLD (DOROTEI), 4.2 MILLION INHABITANTS, ABOUT 3 MILLION VOTERS, SEVEN PROVINCES.

-- MAY 14. 158,000 VOTERS ARE EXPECTED TO SHOW UP AT THE POLLS TO ELECT 28 NEW MUNICIPAL COUNCILS. 12 OF THES COMMUNITIES HAVE MORE THAN 5,000 INHABITANTS AND ACCOUNT FOR ALMOST ALL OF THOSE VOTING. CHIOGGIA, FELTRE, CONTARINA, AND FICAROLO ARE PRESENTLY RUN BY LEFT ALLIANCES AND THE CONTESTS FOR THESE CITY HALLS WILL BE THE MOST CAREFULLY WATCHED. THE SAMPLE HERE IS PERHAPS TOO SMALL AND TOO UN-REPRESENTATIVE TO BE ANYTHING MORE THAN A SLIGHT STRAW IN THE WIND FOR THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. BUT LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS SEEM TO BE ATTACHING CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT TO THE
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OUTCOME OF THIS BALLOTING.

B. FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA. ANOTHER DC FORTRESS (MOROTEI/ FORZE NUOVE), 1.2 MILLION INHABITANTS, ABOUT 700,000 VOTERS, FOUR PROVINCES.

-- JUNE 25-26. ABOUT 700,000 VOTERS WILL BE CASTING THEIR

BALLOTS FOR A NEW CITY COUNCIL IN TRIESTE, A PROVINCIAL COUNCIL FOR GORIZIA, AND A COUNCIL FOR THE REGION.

2. OF THE TWO ELECTIONS, FRIULI INVOLVES THE LARGER SAMPLE OF VOTERS, BUT THESE ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE DETERMINED BY QUESTIONS OF A VERY PARTICULAR NATURE. VOTER CONCLUSIONS RE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROGRAM ILL-WILL IN TRIESTE AGAINST THE OSIMO TREATY WITH YUGOSLAVIA, AND LOCAL CONSERVATIVE REACTION TO PCI INCLUSION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WERE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MAJOR ISSUES. HOWEVER, THE KIDNAPPING OF MORO CHANGED MUCH OF THIS AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT AND THE ISSUES OF PUBLIC ORDER AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAVE CLEARLY MOVED TO THE FOREFRONT.

3. ALSO JUDGING FROM LOCAL PUBLIC COMMENTS, ETC., IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN ROME HAVE HELPED BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS IN FRIULI AND TRIESTE. THUS, WE ARE HEARING MORE CALLS FOR VOTES FOR THE "FRIULI MOVEMENT" AND THE ANTI-OSIMO "CIVIC LIST" IN TRIESTE AS VOTES AGAINST THE "ITALIAN PARTIES".

4. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, IT IS DEBATABLE WHETHER THE NORTHEAST CAN BE CONSIDERED A RELIABLE LITMUS TEST FOR ITALIAN VIEWS AT LARGE. NEVERTHELESS THE OUTCOME WILL PROBABLY GIVE US SOME IDEA OF JUST HOW MUCH NATIONAL QUESTIONS ARE ENCROACHING ON THE SO-CALLED ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS WHOSE OUTCOMES HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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HERETOFORE GENERALLY BEEN DETERMINED BY LOCAL ISSUES AND CIRCUMSTANCES. MOEN.

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